

MEDIA RELEASE
THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2024

2024 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS ANNOUNCED

2024 Australians of the Year - Professor Georgina Long AO & Professor Richard Scolyer AO (NSW)
2024 Senior Australian of the Year - Yalmay Yunupingu (NT)
2024 Young Australian of the Year - Emma McKeon AM (QLD)
2024 Australia's Local Hero - David Elliott OAM (QLD)

9:30pm AEDT, Canberra: Life-saving scientists who are curing Melanoma, an Indigenous teacher and cultural leader, a record-breaking Olympic swimmer and a man whose fossil find paved the way for the nation's Dinosaur museum have been named as the 2024 Australians of the Year.

The Prime Minister, The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, announced the 2024 Australians of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero in a ceremony at the National Arboretum in Canberra this evening.

The award recipients were presented with a glass trophy, a traditional Indigenous coolamon and clap sticks.

The 2024 Australians of the Year are Melanoma treatment pioneers Professor Georgina Long AO and Professor Richard Scolyer AO, both of Sydney, NSW.

Professor Georgina Long AO and Professor Richard Scolyer AO's enduring partnership has saved thousands of lives from melanoma, known as Australia's national cancer.

Less than a decade ago, advanced melanoma was fatal – but thanks to Georgina and Richard's immunotherapy approach, which activates a patient's own immune system, it has become a curable disease. The co-medical directors of Melanoma Institute Australia are sought-after media commentators and advocates for sun-safe behaviour and melanoma prevention.

In June 2023, when Richard (57) was diagnosed with incurable grade 4 brain cancer, he and Georgina (53) developed a series of world-first treatments based on their melanoma breakthroughs. Richard became the world's first brain cancer patient to have pre-surgery combination immunotherapy.

By undertaking an experimental treatment with risk of shortening his life, he has advanced the understanding of brain cancer and is benefiting future patients. Richard has generated widespread public interest by publicly documenting his own cancer treatment and progress.

The 2024 Senior Australian of the Year is teacher, linguist and community leader, Yalmay Yunupingu, of Yirrkala, Northern Territory.

Gentle, generous and funny – Yalmay Yunupingu touches many lives in north-east Arnhem Land. As a teacher and linguist, she guided teaching at Yirrkala Bilingual School for four decades, retiring in March 2023.

Often called the mother of the school, Yalmay started by translating Dr Seuss books at the community library into her local Yolŋu Matha language. She qualified as a teacher and, with her husband (the late M Yunupingu of Yothu Yindi fame and the 1992 Australian of the Year), forged a bilingual teaching approach to make young people strong in their Yolŋu language and culture.

A respected elder, 68-year-old Yalmay is in constant demand for consultations, projects and her traditional healing work. She helps everyone, always with a smile on her face.

In 2005, she was awarded a 'Teacher of Excellence' by the Northern Territory Department of Education and was an Honorary University Fellow at the Charles Darwin University. Since retiring, she has been teaching the next generation about traditional healing.

The 2024 Young Australian of the Year is Australia's most successful Olympian ever, Emma McKeon AM, of the Gold Coast, Queensland.

Emma McKeon AM is the most successful Australian Olympian of all time – a title she claimed before her 28th birthday. She comes from a strong family of Australian swimmers. In fact, her father, uncle, brother and mother have all represented Australia.

Back in 2012, Emma just missed out on being chosen for the London Olympics. She took a break, but rediscovered her passion and went on to make a splash at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, where she claimed six medals from six races.

At the 2020 Summer Olympics, Emma became the first female swimmer and the second woman in history to win seven medals in a single Olympics. She has also broken Commonwealth Games, Olympic and World records.

Now aged 29, Emma has other titles to her name. In 2022 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia, and in 2023 she was named Gold Coast Young Australian of the Year.

The 2024 Australia's Local Hero is Co-founder of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History, David Elliott OAM, of Winton, Queensland.

David Elliott OAM's chance discovery of a dinosaur fossil during routine sheep mustering in 1999 led to the revival of Australia's palaeontology field – and the creation of a palaeo-tourism industry that put outback Queensland on the map.

David's initial fossil discovery was followed by others. As palaeontologists began to return to the region to investigate, David and his wife Judy founded the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History in 2002 as a not-for-profit charity.

The Museum first operated on the couple's property, where they conducted dinosaur digs and built an impressive collection of fossils. Later, it was moved onto donated land. Today, it houses Australia's most significant collection of fossils from the country's largest dinosaurs. A major tourist attraction, it serves as a centre for Australian paleontological research and discovery in Australia.

David, now 66, was recognised for his contributions to science with an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2015.

Chair of the National Australia Day Council, John Foreman OAM, congratulated the 2024 Australian of the Year Award recipients.

"The 2024 Australians of the Year represent the very best of us," said Mr Foreman.

"Georgina and Richard are leading work which is saving countless lives now and, thanks also to the personal commitment of Richard, will lead to an even more extraordinary impact on the health of people around the world in the future.

"Yalmai's long dedication to the education of the Yolngu people, her cultural stewardship and leadership as a natural teacher continues to bring communities together.

"Emma shows us, with grace and humility, how commitment, hard work and passion can lead to greatness. She is a true role model for all Australians, young and old, on how to pursue your dreams.

“David, an everyday Queensland pastoralist who discovered something extraordinary, has dedicated himself to sharing Australia’s dinosaur history and the importance of keeping regional Australia viable and sustainable.

“They are Australians we can all be proud of.”

AWARD RECIPIENTS ON AUSTRALIA DAY

Professor Georgina Long AO, Richard Scolyer AO, Yalmay Yunupingu and David Elliott OAM will attend the National Australia Day Citizenship and Flag Raising Ceremony in Canberra on Australia Day morning, Friday 26 January 2024. They will then travel to Sydney for the evening’s Australia Day events. Emma McKeon will travel to Melbourne on Friday.

Nominations for the 2025 Australian of the Year Awards are now open. If there’s someone you think should be considered, you can nominate them now at australianoftheyear.org.au.

ENDS.

Bio details for recipients attached with this media release – *see following pages*

For further media information on the 2024 Australian of the Year Awards, please contact:

Nicole Browne nicole@mediaopps.com.au 0414 673 762 (text messages preferred 26 January)

PHOTOS: Photos of the 2024 Awards recipients will be available for download at this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/6zg4yokbpghk5cr6nuhkd/h?rlkey=ohbangy3qwgh4l2cjgljq6he&dl=0>

Please credit NADC/Salty Dingo

AWARD RECIPIENT INTERVIEWS ON 26 JANUARY:

Interview access during 26 January 2024 can be limited due to travel and functions.

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards, visit australianoftheyear.org.au

2024 AUSTRALIANS OF THE YEAR



NAMES: **PROFESSOR GEORGINA LONG AO & PROFESSOR RICHARD SCOLYER AO**

Dates of birth: Georgina: 15 November 1970
Richard: 16 December 1966

Live: Both live in Sydney, NSW

Places of birth: Georgina: Sydney, NSW
Richard: Launceston, Tasmania

Occupation/Employer: Georgina: Melanoma Institute Australia
Richard: Melanoma Institute Australia

Education: Georgina: Santa Sabina College, Strathfield, Sydney (1988)
University of Sydney
Scripps Biomedical Research Institute, California USA
Bachelor of Science - 1992
Doctor of Philosophy - 1996
Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow-1997
Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery - 2000
Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (Medical Oncology) - 2008

Richard: Launceston High School, Tasmania (1984)
University of Tasmania (1990)

Volunteering: Georgina: Multiple international melanoma and medical oncology organisations and societies including Society for Melanoma Research (SMR); American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO); and European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO)

Richard: Multiple international melanoma and pathology institutions and advisory committees, including World Health Organisation (WHO) advisor

Useful links: www.melanoma.org.au

2024 SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR



NAME:	YALMAY YUNUPIŊU
Date of birth:	11 January, 1956
Lives:	Yirrkala, Northern Territory
Place of birth:	Yirrkala, Northern Territory
Occupation:	Retired Teacher (Miwatj Aboriginal Corporation / Melbourne University)
Education:	Yirrkala, Northern Territory (1971) Batchelor Institute / Charles Darwin University (2017)
Useful links:	https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-20/nt-yalmay-yunupingu-retires-yirrkala-school/102099452 https://www.nintone.com.au/newsroom/videos/interplay-project-yalmay-yunupingu/
Special note:	Yalmay's late husband M Yunupingu AC was awarded Australian of the Year 1992 – see bio details here: https://australianoftheyear.org.au/recipients/m-yunupingu-ac-memorial

2024 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR



(Getty Images)

NAME:	EMMA MCKEON AM
Date of birth:	24 May, 1994
Lives:	Gold Coast, Queensland
Place of birth:	Wollongong, NSW
Occupation:	Self-employed athlete
Education:	Illawarra Grammar School (2012) Bachelor of Public Health, Griffith University (2021)
Volunteering:	UNICEF; Dolly's Dream
Highlights:	2014 Commonwealth Games Gold 200m Freestyle 2014 Commonwealth Games Gold x 3 relay events 2016 Olympic Gold 4x100m Freestyle (WR) 2016 Olympic Silver 4x200 Freestyle 2016 Olympic Silver 4x100 Medley 2016 Olympic Bronze 200m Freestyle 2017 World Championships Silver 100m & 200m Butterfly 2018 Commonwealth Games Gold 100m Butterfly 2018 Commonwealth Games Gold x 3 relay events 2019 World Championships Gold 4x100m Freestyle 2019 World Championships 4x200 & 4x100m mixed medley 2020 Olympic Gold 4x100m Freestyle (WR) 2020 Olympic Gold 100m Freestyle (OR) 2020 Olympic Gold 50m Freestyle (OR) 2020 Olympic Gold 4x100 Medley (OR) 2020 Olympic Bronze 100m Butterfly 2020 Olympic Bronze 4x200 Freestyle 2020 Olympic Bronze 4x100 Mixed Medley 2022 Commonwealth Games Gold 50m Freestyle 2022 Commonwealth Games Gold 50m Butterfly 2022 Commonwealth Games Gold x 4 Relay Events 2022 Commonwealth Games Silver 100m Butterfly 2022 Commonwealth Games Bronze 100m Freestyle
Useful links:	https://tlaworldwide.com/talent/emma-mckeon/ https://www.olympics.com.au/olympians/emma-mckeon/ https://commonwealthgames.com.au/athletes/emma-mckeon/ https://ias.org.au/emma-mckeon/

2024 AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO



NAME: **DAVID ELLIOTT OAM**

Date of birth: 6 June, 1957

Lives: Winton, Queensland

Place of birth: Brisbane, Queensland

Occupation: Australian Age of Dinosaurs Ltd (voluntary Board executive position)

Education: All Souls and St Gabriel's School (1972)
Longreach Pastoral College (1974)

Volunteering: Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum

Useful links: <https://www.australianageofdinosaurs.com/>